Kelly Askew  (Anthropology/African Studies, University of Michigan)
“Poetry in Motion: One Hundred Years of Zanzibar’s Nadi Ikhwan Safaa”

*Poetry in Motion: One Hundred Years of Zanzibar’s Nadi Ikhwan Safaa* is a 2011 documentary film about the oldest taarab orchestra in the world: Zanzibar’s Nadi Ikhwan Safaa. Taarab is a genre of sung Swahili poetry popular along the coasts and off lying islands of Kenya and Tanzania. The music of coastal East Africa is an aesthetic manifestation of the confluence of Indian Ocean *dhow* trade networks with caravan trade networks from Central and Southern Africa. It was at the East African coast and through Swahili middlemen that these two trading systems would meet. In taarab performance, therefore, one hears the rhythms of local ngömá dances, South Asian vocal timbre, and Arabian instrumentation. Swahili, a Bantu language with significant Arabic vocabulary, ties these together into an urban genre that varies in musical inflection up and down the coast as do the dialects that mark Mombasa Swahili as distinct from Zanzibari Swahili. In this presentation, I wish to share and invite discussion about the challenges we faced in trying to escape from the formulaic genre that “African music documentary” has become.

The “African music documentary” genre was created around West and South African musical forms. Among other things, it entails cutting the visual to a driving beat. But what does one do when the musical form, though “African”, does not have a beat as driving as expected? How does one maintain visual interest? How does one accommodate Western expectations about African music when the selected musical form (a variety of orchestral music) is not easily identifiable as “African”? And how do you deal with the problem we faced of centering the film on a single event – the 100th anniversary concert honoring the 1905 establishment of this orchestra – and having that event go catastrophically badly? Do you stick true to “documentary value” whatever the damage to the film’s original objectives?

I welcome this opportunity to share these dilemmas from the filming and post-production processes of *Poetry in Motion*, showing a few selected clips from the film and interspersing them with discussion about the challenges they entailed. I expect this to lead us into a more general discussion about generic constraints in film production and the use of editorial – not to mention artistic – license in reconciling documentary value with cinematic value.
Vanessa Avery (San Francisco State University) “For the Health of Our People” I am presenting applied visual research on the community mobilization efforts that brought about the creation of the first Garifuna hospital in Honduras. My research takes the form of a twenty minute documentary from the theoretical perspective of applied visual anthropology, which, as stated by MacDougall, has the ability to achieve “understandings of the emotions, intellect, desires, relationships, and mutual perceptions of the participants” that cannot be achieved in the written. Exemplifying Peter Biella’s 2009 argument of the implicit commitment of anthropological films to “attack dominant ideological forms including racism, hyper-masculinity, sexism, imperialism, and militarism”, this film provides a medium for the self-presentation of the Garifuna people as a vibrant and empowered community, collectively addressing the sociopolitical oppression and structural violence imposed on them by the Honduran government.

As a collaboration with the community of Ciriboya, the self-presentation of the community is an important aspect of this film. As filmmaker, I take the role of cultural mediator, using footage of the work of the hospital, everyday life in the village, and interviews with community members to inform a Western audience of the larger sociopolitical context in which hegemonic ideologies separate Garifuna people into the category of the Honduran other, and against which the building of a free hospital takes a stand.

My presentation will begin with a discussion of applied visual anthropology and the collaboration process as it relates to this film. How might my subjectivity and role as filmmaker influence the self-presentation of the community? I will then show a five minute film clip addressing this topic, followed by a question and answer session. Next I will discuss the community mobilization efforts around the establishment of the Garifuna community hospital, followed by another clip of interviews and audience discussion. Lastly, I will discuss the Garifuna stand against sociopolitical oppression and structural violence, and how the hospital exemplifies their struggle. A final clip presenting hospital workers engaged in the biopolitics of healthcare and the final audience discussion will close the session.

Peter Biella (San Francisco State University) and Daniel Chein (San Francisco State University) “Ethnographic Guile”

This presentation offers a close analysis of editing techniques used in the creation of a four minute video sequence taken from work titled The Chairman and the Lions. The video documents many challenges that face a courageous Maasai village bureaucrat.

In considering one sequence from the film, our objective is to foreground the ethnographic film editor’s art – an art that, upon scrutiny, may seem to betray.
Our examples demonstrate how editing invisibly rearranges the temporal order of sync-sound film clips, and how it also displaces audio utterances far from their original synchronous locations. Further, we discuss how a film’s translations, made known to the audience through subtitles, often are not only abbreviations of what was said but also inflations – in the sense that they overtly state assumptions that were never clearly expressed.

The purpose of our case-study is to provide a close up investigation of the ethnographic film editor’s guile. Concrete examples in the presentation may facilitate a discussion of cinematic realism as well as long-take realism’s attractions and limits. The examples also offer an invitation to consider new strategies for ethnographic editing.

Liam Buckley (James Madison University) “‘Style is not important’: The Crafting of Visual Anthropology Newsletters in the 1970s and 1980s”

This presentation examines the newsletters produced by the Program in Ethnographic Film (PIEF), the Society for the Anthropology of Visual Communication (SAVICOM), and the Society for Visual Anthropology (SVA) in the 1970s and 1980s. It focuses on the visuality of the newsletters and the heterogeneity of their design and layout. The publication of these newsletters provided anthropologists and filmmakers with the opportunity to handle the materiality of this print and paper based medium and to work with a set of visual practices from outside their usual domain of expertise: typography, page layout, nameplates, and logotypes. The content of the newsletters is significant as it reflects the history of the professionalization and institutionalization of visual anthropology in the United States during this period. However, the aesthetic crafting of newsletters preserved a vernacular attitude and pleasure in amateur/non-specialized experimentation among visual anthropologists as they became subjects of disciplinary boundaries and academic specialization. The making of newsletters of the 1970s and 1980s stands in stark contrast to the production of today’s standardized, regulated, and industrialized academic journals.

Malcolm Collier (San Francisco State University, College of Ethnic Studies) “Memory and Change: A Photographic Exploration”

This Visual Research Conference presentation is an in-progress report on a long term personal and historical exploration of my home community and surrounding region in northern New Mexico that includes photo elicitation, re-photography, photo analysis, oral history, and memory. The project makes use of photographs made in the region between 1934 and the present by John Collier, Jr., Mary E. T. Collier, Irene Dea Collier, and Malcolm Collier, together with the memories and thoughts of many community members. I will be discussing the importance of
stories, the fragile nature of photo identification, issues of final product design, problems of diverse audiences, and the tensions between personal and professional processes. The presentation will include large numbers of images and many stories.

Jerome Crowder (University of Texas Medical Branch, Galveston) and Dan Price (Honors College, University of Houston) “Vwire: Digital Content Management through Spatial Arrangement: A Tool for Visual Argumentation in the Social Sciences and Humanities”

Images are primary data for many researchers in the humanities and social sciences, and the fecundity of image data will only increase as more high-quality digital images become available to researchers. It is no surprise, then, that scholars are searching for more productive and supple tools for ordering and discussing visual data. The Vwire project initiates an open source and extensible environment for producing, sharing, and discussing visually ordered data sets in social science research. Even those existing database tools that allow researchers to see multiple images simultaneously do not allow for the active and intuitive configuration of the images – like arranging snapshots on a table – that Vwire provides. Vwire allows the researcher to forego a text-based organization system and order images on a purely visual basis. These visual orders may be saved, shared, and discussed across the web. In this way Vwire allows scholars to critically evaluate and organize any number of visual data points without requiring that they categorize these data points with text; i.e., they can analyze visual traits on purely visual/spatial terms.

This presentation concerns the idea of using images as data. We propose two test cases. One uses a small group of Teotihuacan stone masks, which are of archaeological and art historical importance, and the second is from contemporary users of cell phones in a Houston neighborhood. Vwire attends to the fine differences in form and respects the trajectories in gradation that are necessary to construct a nuanced understanding of visual culture and the test cases set the stage for new approaches to visual understanding.

The Visual Research Conference is an opportunity for us to present the Vwire tool to visual anthropologists and ethnographers for their feedback in a number of different ways. First, we will demonstrate the tool we have developed. In that discussion we will present some of the theory we use for thinking about images as data and why we feel this tool addresses our concerns regarding visual analysis. Second, we respect and expect the feedback from our colleagues on both the logic and thought behind Vwire as well as the interface itself. Finally, we would like to brainstorm with the group about how collaborations can be facilitated using Vwire as well as other potential projects where Vwire can be implemented. Unlike any other opportunity, the Visual Research Conference
allows us the chance to present a novel approach to a long standing issue relevant to visual researchers.

**Andrea Heckman (University of New Mexico)  “Woven Stories: Northern New Mexico”**

This presentation focuses on Northern New Mexico weavers, spinners, and fiber groups that have helped artisans combine their efforts to express themselves through the material arts and to sustain their families. It will explore capturing processes and character without the limitations of a how-to chronology.

Using video sequences, we will discuss the processes of interviewing, capturing footage in a spinning mill, dealers who display and discuss rare textiles, and the weavers themselves explaining why they weave. The beauty of northern New Mexico inspires artists. Whether they choose fiber, wood, silver, clay, paint, film, paper, stone, or other materials, they attempt to express themselves in relationship to the light and landscape, and convey a sense of place. Members of three distinct cultures are joined into a human tapestry by a shared love and understanding of fiber. These traditions continue today in the small communities of Mora, Taos, Tierra Amarilla, El Rito, Espanola, Truchas, and Chimayo -- each one bringing a specific contribution to the art and practicality of fiber.

This presentation will continue the dialog about the use of still photography, both current and archival, in conducting research and analyzing findings. It seeks to discuss more deeply filming ethnographic processes. While weaving is recognized as art, textiles are equally important as a historical part of living cultures. Communities are challenged as they strive to honor their traditions while trying to prepare their youth for the modern world. In this project, many young weavers expressed what weaving means in a contemporary sense.

**Paul Henley (Granada Centre for Visual Anthropology, University of Manchester)  “Going ‘Beyond Observational Cinema: Some Personal Reflections on the Film Work of the Granada Centre for Visual Anthropology Over Twenty-Five Years”**

In January 2012, it will be twenty-five years since the foundation of the Granada Centre, University of Manchester. I was appointed its director some six months later. Since then, we have produced of three hundred films, mostly MA and PhD graduation films, but also works by staff and research associates.

This work has been profoundly influenced by the principles of Observational Cinema. I brought these principles with me, having recently graduated from the UK’s National Film and Television School at a time when the approach was in the ascendant there. There are undoubtedly many points of overlap between
Observational Cinema and the methods, aesthetics, and ethics of social or cultural anthropology. But right from the early days, there was a feeling that as anthropologists who made films, rather than as general documentarists tackling anthropological subject matter, we ought to be seeking to ‘go beyond’ Observational Cinema, at least as this notoriously difficult-to-define approach is most commonly understood.

In attempting to go beyond Observational Cinema, our concerns have revolved around four related poles:

- **Context** – how do you tell a wink from a blink?
- **Authorship** – is the ‘plain style’ really necessary?
- **Participation** – whose story is it anyway?
- **Performance** – is ethnographic film merely a fiction (un)like any other?

I will discuss our attempts to confront these issues, supported by a broad variety of clips from our ‘back catalogue’.

**Andrew Irving (Granada Centre for Visual Anthropology, University of Manchester)** “The Lives of Others”

The Lives of Others combines image, voice, and modernist literature to research and represent how everyday practices and social spaces are mediated by modes of inner dialogue and expression that are not normally externalized or made public. The capacity for a complex inner lifeworld encompassing internally represented speech, unfinished thoughts, imaginative reverie, random urges -- and much else besides -- is essential to lived experience and a principle means through which human beings understand themselves and others. Without such forms there would be no social life or existence, however they are rarely the primary focus of anthropological research or monographs.

I argue it is necessary to develop new ways of exploring the content and character of people’s inner dialogues and how these relate to the material environment and general processes of knowing. As there is no objective, independent access to other people’s consciousness or experience, this presents a deep-seated difficulty for anthropology. First, it is difficult because this is a methodological and practical problem rather than a conceptual one. Second, conventional social scientific methods and measures are often too static to capture the transitory and ever-changing character of people’s inner expressions as they emerge in the present tense. Turning this problem into a collaborative, practice-based, research question to be worked on alongside informants in the field, not only generates empirical, visual, and audible data for investigation and analysis, but also helps ensure that the debate is not conducted at levels of theoretical and discursive abstraction remote from people’s lives and concerns.
Noam Osband (University of Pennsylvania) “Santo Patricio: Using Text and Film to Portray a Church and Town"

This presentation will focus on the film Santo Patricio, a documentary film in production about St. Patrick’s Church in Norristown, PA, and a website being created in conjunction with this research project. Norristown, like other destinations in the New Latino Diaspora, has just a brief history of Latino immigration, and the recent influx of Mexican immigrants has revitalized the traditionally Irish Catholic church in Norristown. Centered on various events from December 2010, such as a group wedding for Mexican couples, and the Day of the Virgin of Guadalupe, the film shows the different roles played by the church for these immigrants and the ways this new population has inexorably changed the church, bringing within its walls new customs, ceremonies, and concerns.

The film is also being created in tandem with a website that provides more information about Norristown. This film is just part of an ongoing research project now in its sixth year. This website, in addition to containing other research on Norristown, will contain written commentary on the film: a way of more explicitly engaging the theoretical issues depicted in the film. Moreover, certain clips of ethnographic interest not being used in the film will be placed on the website with written commentary as well. The presentation will consist of showing two clips from the film, one clip from the website that will not be used in the film, and after each clip, showing the material on the website that offers a more theoretical spin on the audio/visual. We want to present and gain feedback on the effectiveness of this approach and think of ways to improve on this method of bringing together the respective strengths of written and filmic materials.

Richard Werbner (University of Manchester) “Sharing Counterpoint 1"

My contribution draws on clips from Counterpoint 1 (running time 37 minutes), which introduces Forum Follies. This series of films carries forward Jean Rouch’s ‘shared anthropology’ at home and abroad, and it complements an earlier series, The Well-Being Quest in Botswana, including Holy Hustlers (2009) and three other films. The main intent is to make more accessible the adversarial culture of academics, our collaboration, and even playful moments of fun in our ‘shared anthropology’ that surrounds the screening of a film from a rough cut to the final one.

The first in the Forum Follies series, Counterpoint 1 pitches the ethnographic filmmaker Richard Werbner into debate with audiences for his film Holy Hustlers, from a rough to a final cut. Along with the interest in ethnographic knowledge, there is the fun and cross-play of argument about the making and the eventual reception of a film.
First comes feedback in the University of Manchester’s Granda Centre for Visual Anthropology. Rough and final clips show how Werbner and editor Andy Lawrence respond. Next are very different audiences for Holy Hustlers in Kyoto, Manchester, and London, and finally the GCVA again, this time for a rough cut of Counterpoint 1 itself.

Should the ethnographic filmmaker rely on spectator sympathy or empathy, and not make a ‘disturbing’ film? When is less voice-over, or less narration, actually more, for the film? Does making a film about a film about a film – a hall of mirrors – create a contradictory trap in which any ‘kernel of truth’ is elusive?

Jennifer Wolowic (University of British Columbia) “Sumaxs Affect: Producing the Networks of Coastal Ts’msyeen Youth”

Sm’algyx, the language of the Ts’msyeen people of Northern British Columbia, contains no direct translation for ‘youth’. The closest translation is sumaxs used for ‘young people’. Despite its Western origins, many First Nations have adopted ‘youth’ as a category definition as they work to define issues and experiences that shape a particular generation. While the age bracket may be fluid and include ages from 10-30, youth has become a symbol of a particular experience of change. Youth is a time when individuals gain increasing power over their movements through the world, but continue to lack the social markers of full adulthood (Arnett 2004). Youth is an experience of transition: changing social networks, insecurity, experimentation, and increased self-determination.

My presentation will discuss the role of visual research in exploring how a group of sumaxs in urban Prince Rupert, British Columbia are finding strength and guidance from peers and extended kinship networks that bridge distance and experience. I will share photographs and video recorded during my 2011 dissertation. Three years ago, I worked with a cohort of youth who had created a “street family” that publicly recognized the importance of peers. My current research reconnects with several of these youth as well as a new cohort of teenagers and explores how people connect through technology. I will present work-in-progress film clips about the social relationships that continue to be produced and flourish despite repeated acts of genocide and how media and technology, including the production of my film, acts to strengthen interpersonal connections.
This past May, we shot footage for a new ethnographic film tentatively entitled "The Lions of Lesoit". The film tracks the challenges facing a Maasai village in Tanzania that is simultaneously battling land-grabbers, illegal loggers, marauding lions, and the lack of education among Maasai youth. We confronted a number of issues along the way that posed challenges to the conventional film narrative arc (crisis to resolution of crisis) and to the ethics of cinematic engagement. In this Visual Research Conference presentation, we wish to pose three primary concerns that bridge the theory/practice divide:

1. Can ethnographic film succeed with alternative narrative arcs, e.g., one that does not have a single peak (crisis) that wends its way towards closure (resolution), but rather a succession of smaller peaks with perhaps no sense of closure?

2. Deploying film ‘guile’ – when ethnographic and narrative value demands require a small sacrifice of documentary value.

3. Sacrificing the big cinematic crisis for the sake of ethnographic engagement, i.e., choosing not to film when pursuit of the crisis would endanger carefully cultivated and highly valued relationships in the field.

The field school’s films were shot in central Tanzania, but this Visual Research Conference presentation will feature the reaction of Maasai audiences from the north. The geographical distance has important consequences. Maasai from the region where we filmed are known for being worldly and attracted to non-Maasai influences. But their escalating HIV rate is now found throughout the Maasai diaspora: the same push and pull factors for migration and HIV-exposure are everywhere increasing. Thus the often tragic stories from the south are both predictive and preventative for northern Maasai who are less acculturated and less worldly-wise: our trigger films can give others crucial information that will help them make informed decisions about city life, sexuality and alternatives to migration for poverty eradication.